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City in the Rain: Writers, Editors, and Publishers in Hong Kong during Japanese Occupation

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City in the Rain: Writers, Editors, and Publishers in Hong Kong during Japanese Occupation

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Dedication

For my parents, Hin Pui, and my dead goldfish

Abstract

City in the Rain: Writers, Editors, and Publishers in Hong Kong during Japanese Occupation

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Rainscape of the City (*Shancheng yujing*) is the only still-extent book publication in Hong Kong during Japanese occupation (1941 – 1945). Written by a pro-Japanese writer Lu Mengshu, it is generally seen as a propagandistic work. Few scholarly studies have looked at its publication history and political ambiguities. The publisher, *Overseas Chinese Daily News* (*Huaqiao ribao*), went to great lengths to make this book project possible. Not only did it overcome the technical challenges, but it also resisted political intervention from the all-powerful propaganda organ. Meanwhile, the content of the book drastically differs from the rosy pictures promulgated by the government mouthpieces. Some stories demonstrate a nostalgia for Western culture, while others contain revolutionary overtones. What were the publisher's motives to invest in this seemingly unprofitable project? What are the textual peculiarities that deviate from conventional propaganda? How did pro-government writers like Lu Mengshu, and others like Ye Lingfeng and Chen Junbao, channel their wartime experience through rain imagery and

symbolism? These are some questions that I seek to answer in this study. In this research, I will look at (a) *Overseas Chinese*'s commercial background which made the publication possible, (b) *Rainscape*'s dual allegiance; and (c) the depiction of rain by three "traitor literati." Ultimately, I hope to complement to the growing scholarship on wartime literature in Hong Kong by teasing out certain nuances in the simplistic dichotomy of "resistance vs. compliance," and examine writers, editors, and publishers whose collective experiences vividly and dynamically portray a "City in the Rain."

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Introduction: Raining for Three Years and Eight Months

Horiuchi Bookstore, the first Japanese-owned bookstore in Hong Kong, designed and produced a set of eight postcards titled "Hong Kong Scenery" during Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, from 1941 to 1945. The set portrays the natural landscape and historic monuments of the conquered city (Figure 1). We see spring-green islands surrounded by wild geese and the Government House etched against the blue sky, with the Japanese *hinomaru* flag waving in the breeze. Now possessed by the Land of Rising Sun, Hong Kong had never appeared so bright and sunny. Strikingly, Chinese writers and intellectuals seemed to live in a different reality. In their works, the city was always enshrouded in clouds and downpours. For as long as the war lasted, Hong Kong remained dim and rainy.

Figure 1: A set of postcards titled "Hong Kong Scenery." Jiajian Zhou and Alan Shun-kwong Cheung, *Zuokun choucheng: rizhan xianggang de dazhong shenghuo* (Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Company Limited, 2015), p. 124-125.

These stories of gloom and doom were produced during the period when Hong Kong was invaded and occupied by Japan towards the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The occupation began when the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Mark Young, surrendered to the Empire of Japan on December 25, 1941, and ended upon the latter's surrender on August 15, 1945. The duration of the war in Hong Kong – three years and eight months – has become synonymous with this darkest period in the history of Hong Kong. During the occupation, the city suffered from massive casualties and terrible destruction. More than 54,440 Hong Kong civilians were executed, while many others were forcibly repatriated, tortured, or mutilated (Kwong 527). Writers and intellectuals willing to toe the official line enjoyed better treatment, but even so, they were always kept under close surveillance and subject to rigorous censorship. Given the tight restrictions on freedom of expression, many writers turned to weather or other apolitical topics in their public, as well as their private, writings. We can find their obsession with weather conditions in a wide array of narratives, genres, and styles.

Among these writers, Lu Mengshu (盧夢殊 n.d.) is noteworthy because of his overt support for the government. In the 1920's, Lu was a minor film critic in Shanghai, co-founding and editing two film magazines, but leaving both shortly afterwards. When the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, he, along with other Chinese writers, fled to Hong Kong. There are no detailed records of his activities in this period, except for a short review he wrote for an anti-Japanese film in early 1941.[1] Once the occupation

[1] *Overseas Chinese* published Lu Mengshu's anti-war film review on December 4, 1941, roughly three weeks before the occupation began (*Lunxian* 241).

started, however, he immediately ingratiated himself with the new government and became one of its most prominent supporters, as indicated by his participation in the Greater East Asian Journalists Conference in 1943 and propagandistic writings in the newspapers. Nevertheless, his fame and fortune ended upon the surrender of Japan in 1945. The pro-Japanese writer swiftly fell into obscurity.

Lu published a novel titled *Rainscape of the City* (Shancheng yujing 山城雨景; hereafter "*Rainscape*") in 1944. *Rainscape* was a side project of the time when Lu was serving the government. The book collected eleven short stories about the predicament of ordinary citizens during the occupation. Most of the stories were first serialized in the newspaper, [2] and later collected into a book and published by *Overseas Chinese Daily News* (*Huaqiao ribao* 華僑日報; hereafter "*Overseas Chinese*") in September 1944. *Rainscape* was a historiographically important book because of its publication history. It is the only still-extant book published during Japanese occupation. Its publisher, *Overseas Chinese,* went to great lengths to make the publication project possible, not least because of the difficulty of procuring the printing materials and technicians in a war-torn city, and of obtaining a green light from the official propaganda organ. How did *Overseas Chinese* navigate the bureaucracy and solicit governmental support despite the newspaper's pro-British political background? Why did the newspaper decide to embark on such an unprofitable and untimely venture? My first chapter, "Publishing in Times of

[2] From the prefaces we learn that these stories were first published in a newspaper, but exactly which newspaper is not mentioned. It was most likely that *Overseas Chinese* serialized Lu's novellas before publishing them in a book.

War," will provide some answers to these questions by investigating the newspaper's commercial connections, entrepreneurial vision, and its then-forthcoming book series.

On the surface, *Rainscape* is no different from any other propaganda piece because it overtly supports the invasion and pays lip service to several newly established policies such as the repatriation of Chinese citizens and the new food rationing arrangement. However, we should not overlook the prevailing pessimism of these stories. They depict ordinary people suffering from starvation, humiliation, illnesses, and death in turbulent times of war. These stories drastically differ from the rosy pictures that the government promulgated in its mouthpieces. In addition, these stories contain subversive political messages. Some show a nostalgia for Western ideals and culture, which is at odds with the government's heavy castigation of Britain, America, and other countries of the Allies. Others contain politically ambivalent and even revolutionary overtones, thereby undercutting the laudatory effect of the book. My second chapter, "Dual Allegiance," will explore these peculiarities that defy our common understanding of a propaganda work.

Among all eleven stories of the book, the same-titled piece "Rainscape of the City" most thoroughly captures the symbolic power of rain. It depicts a decadent man of the gentry having his title and properties stripped during the occupation. The final scene depicts the antagonist walking through a downpour, signifying moral cleansing and revival. The rain's dual features not only echo the political discourse about the "Rebirth of Hong Kong," but more importantly convey some of the author's personal views about the ever-changing fates of himself and other writers in the literary field. For purposes of comparison, I have also chosen two other writers who show similar interest in the use of

rain imagery and symbolism. Ye Lingfeng (葉靈鳳 1905- 1975) uses the rain metaphor to indirectly represent the civilizational threats and harms of the war, while at the same time drawing on its poetic connections with his imagined *Jiangnan*. Chen Junbao (陳君葆 1898- 1982) channels the fear and despair of the vicissitudes of the war into a fixation on weather forecasts and divination. My third and final chapter, "Rain Imagery and Symbolism," will examine the rich mix of rain and weather symbols in the works of these writers in relation to their relationships with the nation, literary field, and their senses of self. Through these three chapters, I wish to present not only the history of writing and publishing in wartime Hong Kong, but also the involved writers, editors, and publishers whose collective experiences vividly and dynamically portray a "City in the Rain."

Before I begin my investigation, I would like to talk briefly about where I collected the materials and information used in this research. My findings are primarily based on wartime newspapers and magazines, including *Overseas Chinese*, *The Hong Kong News*, and *New Asia Monthly* (*Xindongya yuekan* 新東亞月刊), as well as several historiographical works by Hong Kong scholars. My research is especially indebted to two books complied by Lu Wei-luan (Xiaosi) and William Tay titled *Hong Kong Literature during the Japanese Occupation: Collected Works by Ye Lingfeng and Dai Wangshu* (*Lunxian shiqi Xianggang wenxue zuopin xuan – Ye Lingfeng Dai Wangshu heji* 淪陷時期香港文學作品選──葉靈鳳、戴望舒合集) and *Hong Kong Literary Information during the Japanese Occupation* (*Lunxian shiqi Xianggang wenxue ziliao xuan* 淪陷時期香港文學資料選).

I seek to complement the existing scholarship by complicating and unsettling the notions of compliance, loyalty, betrayal, accomplice, and resistance. Conventional historical studies see the writers, editors, and publishers whom I have chosen for this research as having "caved in" or "acquiesced" to the Japanese administration. Therefore, some literary historians tend to focus on the political implications and consequences, but rarely subject the intellectuals' actions and writings to close reading. I hope to address the lack by analyzing the textual aspect of the wartime writings within their historical context, and focus on the personal calculations, connections, tensions, and complexities that prompted these individuals to act or write in a certain way. Doing so, I do not intend to overturn historical verdicts of certain figures, but rather to demonstrate how their complicated undertakings in wartime could challenge existing assumptions about political loyalty and collaboration, and problematize the simplistic dichotomy of "resistance vs. compliance." Ultimately, I hope to offer a glimpse of the wide array of personal experiences of these writers and intellectuals who have been so far rendered as subjects of merely political interest.

Chapter 1: Publishing in Times of War

Hong Kong came under Japanese air raids early on December 8, 1941, as Chen Junbao recounted in his diary: "The aerial attacks this morning blew up one plane and set the Kai Tak Airport on fire, while another bomb ripped through the factory of Chung Hwa Book Company." (569) Infrastructure such as transportation network and publishing companies were prime targets of these military attacks, since damaging them was the most effective way to cut off external communication to the city. As the war progressed, the city's media and book production were, naturally, disrupted. Most publishing houses and bookstores were either permanently shut down or commandeered by the government for propagandistic purposes. The only ones operating, like Taitung Publishing House and Nanfang Publishing House, focused on entertainment periodicals like *New East Asia Monthly and Popular Weekly* (*Dazhong zhoubao* 大眾周報). In the three years of occupation, there was but one book-length publication: *Rainscape of the City*.

In what follows, I will explore the political circumstances and commercial connections that contributed to the successful publication of *Rainscape*. Firstly, I am interested in how *Overseas Chinese*, a relatively independent newspaper, managed to retain its publishing hardware and resources without experiencing the same fate as other major publishers or bookstores. I will emphasize the commercial connections of *Overseas Chinese* with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce that gave the newspaper leeway in both the former colonial and current administration. In addition, while some literary historians characterize *Overseas Chinese*'s publication of *Rainscape* as evidence of it being either a coerced victim or an enabler of a propaganda project, I would like to investigate whether

Overseas Chinese also had its own stake in this project, especially considering the fact that it was planning to launch a new book series in late 1944, the same year that it published *Rainscape*. All in all, I would like to show that despite the new regime ruling the media with an iron fist, some publishers like *Overseas Chinese* could still navigate the bureaucracy and find a small space for personal maneuvers.

THE BUSINESS BEHIND THE MEDIA

At the beginning of the occupation, the government exercised close control over the media. It shut down many major publishers and bookstores over suspicions about their political connections (Chen 593).[3] It also consolidated the press from a dozen to only four morning newspapers in 1942.[4] These newspapers included *The Hong Kong News*, *South China Daily* (*Nanhua ribao* 南華日報),[5] *Island Daily* (*Xingdao ribao* 星島日報), and *Overseas Chinese*. *The Hong Kong News* was a government mouthpiece that was published in English, Chinese, and Japanese. The other three newspapers were privately owned and went through different levels of restructuring. *South China Daily* was founded by Lin Bosheng (林柏生 1902 – 1946), and merged with *Freedom Daily* (*Ziyou ribao* 自由日報) when the war started. Lin was a close confident of Wang

[3] One example is Kaiming Bookstore, which was shut down and had its properties auctioned off on February 17, 1942.

[4] Besides four morning daily newspapers, there was also one evening daily newspaper *East Asia Evening News* (*Dongya wanbao*東亞晚報) (*Lunxian* 100).

[5] *South China Daily* is different from the English-language newspaper *South China Morning Post*, although they share the same Chinese name "南華日報." The former was established by Lin Bosheng in 1930, while the latter was founded by Australian-born Chinese Tse Tsan-tai and British journalist Alfred Cunningham in 1903.

Jingwei (汪精衛1883-1944), the head of the Japanese puppet government in Mainland China. *Island Daily* was combined with *Chinese Script Daily (Huazi ribao* 華字日報) and changed into *Fragrant Island Daily* (*Xiangdao ribao* 香島日報). *Overseas Chinese* was merged with *Popular Daily (Dazhong ribao* 大眾日報). Despite the business merge, *Overseas Chinese* was one of the two newspapers – the other one being the Wang Jingwei-backed *South China Daily* – able to keep their titles intact, which signified a certain level of independence. It was also able to hold on to its long-time editor Hu Waiming and other staff throughout the war instead of having them dismissed and replaced by government appointees (Ding 66).

Surviving the media purge was not the only obstacle that *Overseas Chinese* had to overcome in order to publish a book. The newspapers also needed to secure enough resources such as printing paper, machines, and personnel amidst growing wartime shortages. This was especially difficult since the government had monopolized the supply of printing paper at the beginning of the war to coerce the newspapers into either merging with one another or shutting down for good (*Lunxian* 100). To make things worse, the government also forced out or took over many major publishers. A case in point was Commercial Press (later changed to Fengguo Publisher), one of the largest publishers in the city. The government commandeered some of its machinery to print military papers, while dismantling the rest and sending it back to Japan (Chen 587; Zhuang 129). Even if *Overseas Chinese* wanted to outsource its publication projects, it would have a hard time finding a printer.

Since outsourcing was not an option, *Overseas Chinese* could only rely on its in-house printing and publication department. Fortunately, the department was well-established and adept at large-scale journalistic projects. Beginning in the late 1930's, it grew from a hastily assembled team with "only three types of typesetting fonts and no installation of stamping plate and printing machines" to a leading publisher which specialized in both official and popular printings (Ding 48). It had become the first and exclusive distributer and/or publisher for the British government, printing *Hong Kong Laws Collection* (*Xianggang fali huibian* 香港法例彙編) and *Canton-Hankow Railway Survey* (*Yuehanlu quanxian bofanglu* 粵漢路全線博訪錄) in 1936.[6] The scale and immense investment of the *Canton-Hankow Railway Survey* were unprecedented in the media at that time. *Overseas Chinese* sent two journalists to investigate the newly opened Canton-Hankow Railway for 26 days, and then published their travel logs in the newspaper and later in an anthology. When most newspapers were still purchasing and translating reports from Shanghai or Western newspapers in the 1930's, the fact that *Overseas Chinese* made a considerable investment in this initiative demonstrated its maturity and ambition as an industry pioneer. The newspaper was not just content in the role of a commissioned government publisher, but also branched out to private publications, including *Conversations on Social Problems* (*Shehui wenti tanhuahui* 社會問題談話會) and

6 *Hong Kong Laws Collection* were several volumes of legally binding documents. It was published by Yongfa Publishing Company and distributed by *Overseas Chinese*.

Philippine Travelogue (*Feilubin youji* 菲律賓遊記) in 1937 and 1938, respectively.[7] Its in-house ownership of typesetting, stamping plate making, and newspaper printing technologies, as well as its depth of experience in handling large book projects contributed to the successful publication of *Rainscape* (Ding 142).

Having the resources and expertise might be necessary for publishing a book in times of economic scarcity, but are far from sufficient. If the precedent of the Commercial Press accentuated the difficulty of keeping the hardware out of the hands of the government, then one wonders how *Overseas Chinese* successfully convinced the Japanese authorities to allow them to start a book project while avoiding their intervention, especially given its suspicion-inviting history with the British colonial government and Nationalist Party in the pre-war period. As mentioned above, *Overseas Chinese* was the exclusive publisher for official gazettes and legal documents for the colonial government (Ding 85). In addition, when the newspaper conducted the *Canton-Hankow Railway Survey*, its journalists relied very much on the introduction and help of Ling Hongxun, the minister of transportation of the Nationalist government (*Yuehanlu quanxian bofanglu* 1). In return, *Overseas Chinese* aligned itself with the political stance of the Nationalist government and became vocal about defending the city against Japanese invasion in the early days of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

[7] Both volumes are no longer available, but we learn that the authors were Lou Ding (老丁n.d.) and Wai Guok-leon (衛國綸n.d.) indicating that they are private works rather than government documents. One point worth mentioning is that Wei Guolun was an editor of *Overseas Chinese*. We could find that the publication of *Philippine Travelogue* adhered to the same pattern as *Canton-Hankow Railway Survey.* Both were travel journals which were first serialized in the newspaper for a while first before being published in a book form.

This intimacy with the anti-Japanese authorities somehow did not affect *Overseas Chinese*'s standing in the new regime. Its resourcefulness is apparent if we look at the plight of *Island Daily*, which was equally vocal against Japanese aggression as *Overseas Chinese* in the pre-war period.[8] After the fall of Hong Kong, the owner of *Island Daily*, Singaporean merchant Aw Boon-Haw (胡文虎1882-1954), was arrested and put in prison, while *Island Daily* had to change its name to *Fragrant Island Daily*, signifying a change of ownership. The awful outcome did not befall *Overseas Chinese* or its owner Shum Wai-yau (岑維休1897- 1985). Admittedly, the publication of *Overseas Chinese* was, like any publication at that time, subject to the scrutiny of the official censor, as proven by the official stamp on the cover page of *Rainscape* that indicated "Approval by Press Division of the Governor of Occupied Hong Kong."(Figure 2) However, the fact that *Overseas Chinese* could maintain some of its independence and embark on a publication project was already an achievement.

[8] *Island Daily* was taken over by the Nationalist Party to promote resistance literature in the late 1930's (Cheng 52).

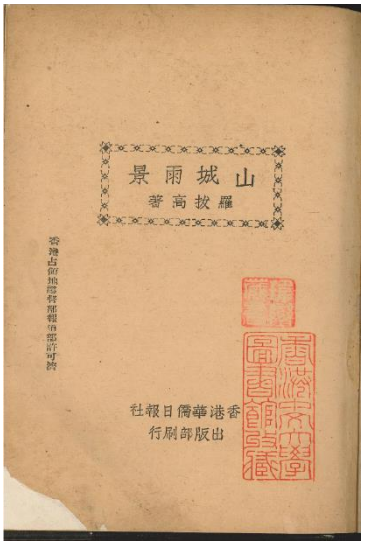

Figure 2: The title page of *Rainscape of the City*. Mengshu Lu. *Shancheng yujing* (Hong Kong Overseas Chinese Publishing Section, 1944), Title Page.

Why did *Overseas Chinese* receive better treatment by the government? There are no existing documents that suggest any official endorsement of *Overseas Chinese* or government-level involvement in the publication of *Rainscape*. This is because these documents, if they ever existed, would quite understandably have been destroyed by the owner, Shum Wai-yau, to protect his reputation in the post-war period. However, we could reconstruct a web of connections involving *Overseas Chinese* and the government if we look at the former's commercial background. The newspaper was formerly known was *Hong Kong Chinese Chamber of Commerce Daily* (*Xianggang huashang zonghui bao* 香港華商總會報), which was owned by the Hong Kong Chinese Chamber of Commerce (hereafter "HKCCC") and started publication in 1923. However, since the newspaper suffered huge losses, the HKCCC sold the business together with the machines and lead

types to Shum Wai-yau two years later (Ding 39). This transaction cemented a long-standing connection between *Overseas Chinese* and the HKCCC. *Overseas Chinese* regularly published the notices and announcements of the HKCCC, serving as its information window for the general public. It also continued the same pro-business posture as *Hong Kong Chinese Chamber of Commerce Daily,* emphasizing the city's commercial development. Even its editing policies showed some traces of its predecessor. For example, *Overseas Chinese* inherited the legacy of having in-house journalists instead of buying news from an external agency (Ding 41).

The close relationship with the HKCCC was an asset when Hong Kong fell into Japanese hands, because the institution acted as a bridge between *Overseas Chinese* and the authorities. The HKCCC had a rather significant role in the new regime. Dong Zhongwei (董仲偉1892 – 1968), the then-president of the HKCCC, was a member of the 22-strong Chinese Cooperative Council that directly answered to the Governor of Occupied Hong Kong, Rensuke Isogai (磯谷廉介1886-1967). *Overseas Chinese* not only implicitly benefited from Dong's influence in the occupied government, but also, in a way, documented his rise in the new regime. On January 31, 1941, the newspaper reported that Dong Zhongwei, speaking on behalf of local Chinese merchants, filed a petition against the ban on large-value banknotes (Snow 111). This show of force established Dong as an influential representative for Chinese business interests. One week later, Dong, along with other key social figures, was invited to the luncheon hosted by Lieutenant-General Takashi Sakai (酒井隆1887 – 1946) at the Peninsular Hotel. It was a clear gesture of

soliciting their cooperation by the government, since shortly afterwards the same group of people were recruited to form the official advisory committees. Interestingly, the invitation letter of the banquet was first published in *Overseas Chinese* before being reposted in the government mouthpiece *The Hong Kong News* ("Japanese Leader to Entertain HK Chinese").[9] *Overseas Chinese* obviously had inside information when the government extended its olive branch to the Chinese merchants. The newspaper had successfully situated itself within the powerful commercial and political circles in the new regime. Afterwards, *Overseas Chinese* continued to cultivate closer connections with the Japanese administration. Around half a year before the publication of *Rainscape*, the newspaper had published some short writings by Japanese cultural icons such as Kanda Kīchirō (神田喜一郎1897 – 1984) and Shimada Kinji (島田謹二 1901- 1993). Kanda and Simada oversaw the entire cultural development of Hong Kong and other East Asian regions, and Shimada, the head of the wartime libraries, played a significant role in printing, sales, distribution and exports of books in the city. *Overseas Chinese'*s backdoor connection with the authorities conceivably cleared some roadblocks in the bureaucracy and facilitated the successful publication of *Rainscape*.

[9]*The Hong Kong News* published an article titled "Japanese Leaders to Entertain HK Chinese" about the dinner at the Peninsular Hotel on January 8, 1942. In the article, it identified the information source as *Overseas Chinese*. I cannot find the original copies of *Overseas Chinese* between October 24, 1941 and March 17, 1942.

MOTIVES FOR AN UNTIMELY PROJECT

Even though *Overseas Chinese* could procure the publication resources and official permission, it had no obvious reason to publish *Rainscape*. After all, publishing a book-length literary work would likely end in commercial failure, as very few citizens of the war-afflicted city could afford the luxury of leisure reading. The choice of writer was also counterintuitive, since Lu Mengshu had been surpassed by other writers in Hong Kong such as Ye Lingfeng and Dai Wangshu (戴望舒1905-1950) in terms of popularity and literary acclaim. In addition, Lu was notoriously opportunistic. The fact that he wrote anti-war film reviews in late 1930's did not stop him from being one of the most outspoken supporters of the government when the city fell into Japanese hands. For these reasons, some historians have speculated that *Overseas Chinese*'s publication of *Rainscape* owed much to political pressure. This motive is even more convincing given that the contention of some historians that Ye Lingfeng and Dai Wangshu wrote the foreword and prologue of *Rainscape* under duress (*Lunxian* 30).

I agree with the claim that the publication of *Rainscape* was politically motivated. However, I would also like to complicate the matter and point out that *Overseas Chinese* also had a private agenda in getting the book published. The publication might not have been driven by financial incentives, but it helped cement *Overseas Chinese*'s image as the most up-to-date and resourceful information provider in the city. There were several incidents that show how adamant and aggressive *Overseas Chinese* was in building and retaining this reputation. To begin with, it was the first newspaper in Hong Kong to issue

Sunday papers. Most newspapers tended to cease publication when their typesetters were on statutory leave on Sundays. Going against the grain, *Overseas Chinese* adopted lithographic printing which used an entire printing plate instead of text blocks, thereby allowing the printing of Sunday papers without the assistance of a block-aligning typesetter. It was an advanced printing technique first utilized by some Shanghai newspapers like *Shenbao* in early modern times. *Overseas Chinese* was the first to introduce this technology to Hong Kong. It also did lithographic printing on occasions when a fast and timely report was needed, such as the fire at Ying Wong Hotel on March 11, 1929, and the arrival of Japanese troops on December 26, 1941. The most notable event was the Canton-Hong Kong Strike from 1925 to 1926 (Ding 84; Li 57). During the region-wide strike, many typesetters left work, or the city, and almost all newspapers ceased operations. *Overseas Chinese* was the only one innovative enough to report on the Big Strike using lithographic printing. The coverage of the strike was a huge publicity coup, because it left general readers with the strong impression that Overseas Chinese was the city's foremost all-weather provider of information (Li 57).

It is worth mentioning that *Overseas Chinese*'s use of lithographic printing came with a cost disadvantage, because the technique was more expensive than regular printing. More importantly, a timely report might win the hearts of some audiences but run the risk of offending others. For instance, its swift resumption of publication after the fall of Hong Kong invited attack and criticism from the Nationalist government in the post-war period (Cheng 106). When being interrogated by the Nationalist government about the intentions in doing so, the owner Shum Wai-yau replied that he continued the publication

because he did not want to leave the publishing tools idle for the enemy's use or make all employees lose regular pay checks (Cheng 106). Whether it was the truth or merely an excuse, we can see that *Overseas Chinese* was willing to sacrifice short-term financial returns to uphold its reputation as the leader of the industry. Meanwhile, its actions did not show a clear party inclination. Judging from its ongoing practice, we could speculate that *Overseas Chinese*'s publication of *Rainscape* might be less a politically motivated choice than a display of professionalism or even a form of social responsibility.

Another possible reason for *Overseas Chinese* to print *Rainscape* was to pave the way for its upcoming "Overseas Chinese Book Series," which was printed on the first pages of the book (Figure 3). The series consists of two additional novels by Lu Mengshu, *Three Women* (*Sannu* 三女) and *Chop Suey House* (*Zasui guan* 雜碎館), one novel titled *The Fire of Youth* (*Qingchun zhihuo* 青春之火) by Cheung Jau-shan (張丘山 n.d.), and a non-fiction *Guide to Hong Kong Local Customs* (*Xianggang fengsu tong* 香港風俗通) by Lam Ou (藍鷗 n.d.). I could not trace any biographical information about these two writers other than their (pen) names, but Lam Ou's articles appeared in *Popular Weekly*, a propagandistic magazine. In fact, his column on "Collection of Cantonese Proverbs" replaced Dai Wangshu's "Illustrated Cantonese Idioms" on November 11, 1944 when Dai switched to work for the literary supplement "Hong Kong Arts and Literature" of *The Hong Kong News*.[10] Comparing the two columns, we can see that Lam's column did not enjoy

[10] Lam Ou first started to appear on *Popular Daily*, to the best of my knowledge, on 4 Nov 1944. Dai Wangshu wrote the column under the pen name *Dashi* 達士 (literally "Knowledgeable Gentleman").

his predecessor's privilege of having accompanying illustrations.[11] The comparatively meagre resources allocated to Lam was probably due to his relative obscurity. Lam also adopted a more politically neutral tone when explaining the proverbs; he did not try to slip in any political innuendoes as Dai did. Though we did not know much about the two writers Cheung Jau-shan and Lam Ou, we can surmise that they were not as well-known or politically active as Lu Mengshu. Perhaps *Overseas Chinese*'s choice to put Lu Mengshu's *Rainscape* first in the series was to take advantage of the pro-government writer's influence and prepare for future book series extending to other writers, topics, and genres.

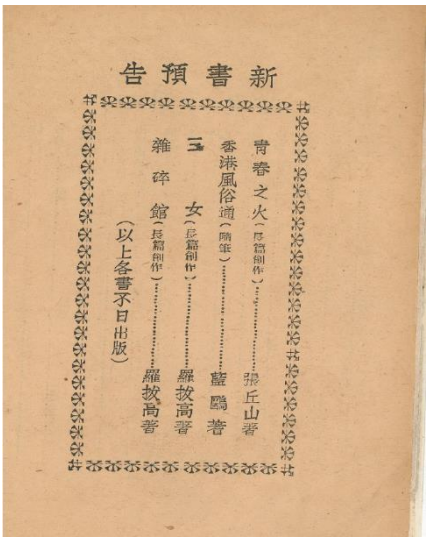

Figure 3: The Promotion of "Overseas Chinese Book Series" in *Rainscape of the City*. Mengshu Lu. *Shancheng yujing* (Hong Kong Overseas Chinese Publishing Section, 1944), Promotion Page.

[11] The first few issues of the column also only showed Dai Wangshu's name, with no mention of the illustrator.

Unfortunately, my argument shall remain a speculation until the future unearthing of related materials. It was quite possible that the plan for subsequent publication was never followed through, because by the time of *Rainscape*'s publication the war had already turned against the Japanese army. In addition, *Overseas Chinese* fell out with Lu a few months after the book's publication, and Lu resigned from the editor's position to establish his own magazine. Currently, we only have a single page of advertisement in *Rainscape* about the upcoming "Overseas Chinese Series" that indicated the newspaper's publication project. For *Overseas Chinese*, publishing *Rainscape* was not only a reaction to political pressure, but also a strategy to maintain its independence, demonstrate its media professionalism, uphold its mission to keep the public informed, and/or prepare for upcoming business endeavors. The complexity prompts us to rethink the role of *Overseas Chinese* as a publisher of wartime literature during the occupation.

Chapter 2: Dual Allegiance

Even though *Rainscape* is the only still-extant book published during the occupation, it does not have much of a presence in the existing literary and historical studies. On the rare occasions that scholars do mention the book, they take it as a testament to the writer's political inclinations. For instance, literary scholar Lu Wei-luan uses *Rainscape* as a typical example of "some people operating different schemes to suppress others and gain benefits when the political environment is changing." (*Lunxian* 31) In a similar derogatory tone, historian William Tay says that *Rainscape* represents "the situation that petty nobodies shot to fame in turbulent times." (*Lunxian* 32) Few, if any, scholarly works deviate from this line of thought. In this chapter, I will offer a more detailed biography of the author to see how his political life might have predetermined the way historians understand and interpret the book. Then I will do a textual analysis of several stories that contradict the author's presumed image and undermine the propagandistic effect of the book. With this case study, I would like to invite more discussion about the historical importance of the book, as well as reflections on the current historiographical practice on wartime literature.

A Difficult Climb to Fame

Lu's relative anonymity in the pre-war period is part of the reason why historians have only remembered his involvement in the political scene during the occupation. He started off primarily as a film critic in Shanghai in the late 1920's. He co-founded and edited two film magazines – *The Movie Guide* (*Yinxing* 銀星) in 1926 and *Motion Picture*

Review Magazine (*Yingxi zazhi* 影戲雜誌) in 1929 – but left the position after one or two issues and therefore failed to benefit from the magazines' later popularity in the media. He also published a few fiction and non-fiction works, including *Sparkles of Fire* (*Xinghuo* 星火) in 1927, and *Films and Literature* (*Dianying yu wenyi* 電影與文藝) and *Sister Ah Chuan* (*Ahchuan jie* 阿串姐) in 1928, but none made any splash in the literary world. Things did not turn for the better after he came to Hong Kong.[12] He took up minor jobs and contributed to newspapers and periodicals sporadically, including writing a positive review for an anti-war film, *East Asia Light* (*Dongya zhi guang* 東亞之光), during the high tide of nationalism in early 1941 (*Lunxian* 240 - 241).

Lu finally caught a break when Hong Kong fell into Japanese hands. At that time, prominent social figures like Mao Dun (茅盾1896-1981) and Jin Chung Hwa (金仲華 1907-1968; editor-in-chief of *Island Daily*) secretly fled back to Mainland China with the assistance of the Communist Party (*Xianggang: daoyanji* 68). The rest, like Ye Lingfeng or Dai Wangshu, while acquiescing to the demands of the government, usually kept a low profile to avoid the ridicule of his peers. Lu was an exception. He showed unreserved support for the new regime in public, as indicated by his participation in the Greater East Asian Journalists Conference in November 1943.[13] This was an official event in Tokyo

[12] The exact date of his immigration to Hong Kong are unknown.

[13] Both the Greater East Asian Journalist Conference and Greater East Asia Writers Conference were supplementary events of the Greater East Asia Conference, which was an international summit held by the Empire of Japan in Tokyo in November 1943. Guests of the Greater East Asia Conference included the representatives of various Japanese-occupied regions in East Asia, such as Wang Jingwei, the President of the Reorganized National government of the Republic of China, and Zhang Jinghui, the Prime Minister of Manchukuo.

that hosted media representatives from the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." Because of the political nature of the event, most writers either found an excuse not to attend, or like Ye Lingfeng vehemently denied any involvement afterwards (Zhao 321). Not only did Lu attend the conference, he also had his speech at the conference recorded and broadcast it over a local radio channel, and serialized his Tokyo travel journals for over two months in *Overseas Chinese* (*Lunxian* 112). This journal, titled "Some Words on My Eastbound Journey," was serialized irregularly from December 31, 1943 to February 27, 1944. It is the writer's first-person account lauding the hospitality and cultural sophistication of Japan, and boasts of his relations with high-ranking officials and influential figures like *Shenbao*'s president Chen Binhe (陳彬龢1897—1945), a widely known "traitor literatus" of the time. His deep involvement with politic activities and prolonged media exposure cemented his reputation as one of the most trusted allies of the government.

This distinct authorial image has led many readers and historians to the conclusion that *Rainscape* is just like any other propaganda. Granted, the book features some overt flattery of the Japanese administration and policies. Ordinary citizens who suffer from hunger have their lives spared because of the unexpected intervention of the government, while the decadent man of the colonial gentry is hoisted by his own petard. Taking a closer look, however, we find that some seemingly insignificant details contain equivocal connotations and even off-handed criticisms, thereby undercutting the propagandistic power of the book. Only by addressing these nuances and complexities can we form a full understanding of the literary work in its own light.

POWERLESS PROPAGANDA

At first glance, the story "Queuing for Rice" places the rice rationing policy in a good light. Under this policy, each citizen could receive "six taels and four maces" (around one bowl) of rice per day starting from early 1942. Set at a time before the enactment of this policy, "Queuing for Rice" portrays a poor and hungry man constantly suffering from physical assaults by his wife because he fails to purchase rice from the black market. Despite lining up on the main road for several days and hiding under someone else's veranda by the road for a few long winter nights, "he still hasn't seen a single grain of rice so far, but meanwhile he is dried into a hungry ghost" (*Shancheng* 10). On the verge of death, he reconciles with his wife while the couple draws their final breath. In a miraculous turn of events, however, the government implements the rice rationing policy and saves their lives. At the end of the story, the well-fed couple flaunts their sweet happiness in front of an old lady downstairs who used to arbitrate their household arguments.

The story seems to serve the interests of the government by exaggerating the benefits of its rice rationing policy. We can contrast it with other writers' accounts. For example, in *Diary of the Occupation of Hong Kong* (*Xianggang lunxian riji* 香港淪陷日記) published in 1946,[14] the Mongolian Chinese author Sakongle (薩空了1907- 1988) recalled that the rice distribution agencies were so few – only one or two for every district

[14] *Diary of the Occupation of Hong Kong* was published in 1946 after occupation ended, so we can presume that it is not as politically inflected as other works that were published during war time.

– that people had to endure similar delays and agonies to procure rice as before the policy was established. (Lau 60). The stark difference between the two accounts indicates that "Queuing for Rice" whitewashes the reality in the same manner as any other government mouthpiece would.

However, the story also contains some details that are at odds with conventional propaganda. First, the happy ending of the story does not mention exactly how the couple has survived the last moment and held out long enough for the rescue. Instead, departing from the story proper, the author inserts a small paragraph bolstering the benefits of rice rationing:

> The rice rationing method has offered so much convenience to the citizen! The rice distribution agencies increase. With a smaller crowd, purchasing rice is easier. Also, there is a precise scientific survey. If you have the money, it is guaranteed that white grains would become rice that enter your stomach one bowl after another. (12-13)[15]

The above demonstrates a shifting tone and point of view. The story proper is told from an omnipresent third-person point of view, which is characterized by the constant use of "he" or "she" and oscillation between the protagonist's or his wife's perspective or consciousness. This narrating voice gives us the most intimate details of the physical and emotional state of the protagonist and his wife, all without showing much presence or emotion. In the most important passage of this supposed propaganda, nevertheless, the

[15] All translations in this thesis were done by me unless otherwise indicated.

disembodied voice comes to the forefront and directly addresses the reader. It strives to convince the reader of the advantages of the rice rationing policy in the crudest and bluntest terms possible. This passage interrupts the original narrative, almost as if an advertisement had accidentally been pieced together with a fictional short story. The existence of the passage is made even more conspicuous and awkward because the narrative returns to a third-person point of view immediately afterwards without any proper transition. This passage not only diminishes the overall evocative power of the work, but also draws attention to the very nature of propaganda.

Equally problematic is the story's favorable characterization of foreigners. After promoting the benefits of rice rationing policy, the narrator explains how the protagonist could afford to purchase the rice under the new policy. It turns out that the protagonist has used his severance pay from his previous job to buy the rice. He was once an employee of a Western firm back in the colonial days, constantly overworked by the expatriate boss and ridiculed by his peers for being a "foreigner's dog." However, when the firm was shut down at the beginning of the occupation, the expatriate boss was kind enough to pay the protagonist three months' salary, which the protagonist later used to purchase rice. This final touch shows that the expatriate, though always giving his local subordinates a hard time, has lived up to his entrepreneurial ethics by laying the staff off with a fair compensation. Hence, the protagonist's access to food owes as much to the generosity of the Western employer as the food rationing policy. This is a direct contravention of the prevailing propaganda campaign which aimed at condemning the

degeneracy of the former colonizer and establishing the moral high ground for the new regime.

In addition, the protagonist shows some nostalgia and furtive admiration for the Westerner's lifestyle throughout the story. For example, the protagonist goes to great lengths to steal a glass brandy bottle from his expatriate boss and adorn this stolen treasure with paper flowers so as to make his room look brighter and nicer. When he accidentally drops the imported glass bottle to the ground, he is so devastated that "the fragments of the glass become knives stabbing into his heart one at a time." (8) The same reverence for Western culture also characterizes the protagonist's life goals of "living in a big Western-styled house, owning a more beautiful glass vase, and a redwood table that makes everybody envious."(9) It appears that even though the city changed hands to the Japanese, general citizens like the protagonist still look back at the time under British colonization for a model of decent life.

Another peculiarity of the story is the time of the publication. "Queuing for Rice" was written on February 10, 1942, roughly a month after the implementation of the rice rationing policy (Lau 60). However, when *Rainscape* was published on September 1, 1944, the policy had already been abolished. The government rescinded the policy on April 4, 1944, because it could no longer obtain enough rice from occupied areas such as Taiwan, Manchukuo, and Korea, and had no choice but to shift the responsibility to local merchants who imported rice via private channels (Lau 60 - 65). Afterwards, the whole city suffered from severe inflation of rice prices. The price of rice was $0.374 per catty

under the official rice rationing policy,[16] but rose to $14 Japanese Military Yen (JMY) per catty in 1944, and rocketed to JMY $90 per catty in 1945 after the policy was repealed (Lau 7, 67). As someone so close to the authorities, the author would not have been ignorant of the serious repercussions and social unrest caused by the termination of the policy. To publish a short story at that particular time seems ill-conceived at the very least.

Besides "Queuing for Rice," other stories also step outside the parameters of propaganda. "The Portrait of the Loner" depicts an educated man, Yuan Guanzhao, taking pride in his loneliness, a quality that he finds mirrored in "Greek culture" and "sentiments of the Renaissance Period." (85) Once again, we can see that the story's reference to Western civilization is out of tune with the official castigation of Western culture and language during the occupation.[17] The mentioning of "Western Renaissance" is also politically incorrect, because the term flies in face of the on-going campaign promoting its own brand of "Renaissance." An article titled "East Asian Renaissance" (*Dongya wenyifuxing* 東亞文藝復興) published in July 1942 in *New East Asia Monthly* advocates that Hong Kong break free from Anglo-American influences and establish a new culture in East Asia (77). The article's use of "*wenyifuxing*" (literally "renaissance") differs from the word's original meaning and takes on new cultural roots. The author's

[16] It is unclear whether the original rice price was Hong Kong Dollar or Japanese Military Yen. The exchange rate for HKD to JMY was 2:1 at the beginning of the occupation.

[17] There was a city-wide ban on the use of English. The only exception was the government-run trilingual newspaper *The Hong Kong News.*

choice to stick to the old definition of the term and set the Western Renaissance as a benchmark of depth and cultivation is deeply unflattering to the authorities.

In addition, the protagonist, Yuan Guanzhao, can be seen as an authorial avatar, because he shares a similar aesthetic philosophy to the author Lu Mengshu. For example, Yuan seeks to "change the philosophy of stillness and tranquility in China, transforming it into liveliness and vitality." (86) The same argument is proposed by Lu in his essay titled "Criticizing *Silver Light*" in his 1927 film review collection *Sparkles of Fire*. He derides the fellow editor of a magazine, *Silver Light,* for failing to understand "lively" Western culture, because the editor blindly adheres to the traditional ethics of "stillness and silence." (*Xinghuo* 49) In fact, this is not the first time the author turns his back on his own culture. Following the lead of most May Fourth writers, he discarded traditional Chinese culture and drew inspiration from the West (especially imported movies). Lu's 1928 novel *Sister Ah Chuan,* in which the titular character is married for thirty years without even meeting her husband, is the author's strongest critique of traditional values such as female chastity and ritualistic rigidity. Lu's choice of a Western-sounding pen name, "Robert Gao,"[18] for *Rainscape* reiterates his affection for Western culture.

Another story, "Dawn," exposes the grim side of the repatriation policy. The government started sending non-locals back to their hometowns either through persuasion or semi-coercion from 1942 on. Government mouthpieces like *The Hong Kong News* justified the policy by claiming that "Chinese will soon be able to enjoy freedom of

[18] In Cantonese, the pen name "羅拔高" (*lobatgou*) is also a close homophone to "蘿蔔糕" (*lobaakgou*). The latter means turnip cake, allegedly the author's favorite dim sum at a Chinese restaurant.

movement of both their persons and resources to the betterment of their own welfare and to the increase of common co-prosperity." ("Chinese Overseas" front page) The story, however, undercuts such an account by showing the reasons why citizens choose to leave the city and what kind of fate awaits them. It depicts a father and daughter leading a difficult life in Hong Kong. Ever since the war started, the father is so worried that his beautiful daughter might fall victim to misfortune that gray hairs are growing on both sides of his head. To avoid aerial attack, they crowd under someone's veranda at night, along with many other citizens. Eventually they decide to return to their hometowns. Here is how the story describes the homecoming scene:

> Many wear a deadpan expression with two lines of painful tears, some even stained by new wounds. But they have no time to care about those. They need to grasp their lives tightly, sailing towards their distant hometown. (6)

For these repatriates, there is no joy of freedom or happiness for family reunion. Instead, it is in a state of utter desolation that they leave Hong Kong, as if condemned prisoners edging towards their end, because they are aware that even if they could make it to their hometown safely, their situation would not fare any better. This scene negates the government's promises in the newspapers while highlighting the predicament of most citizens after the surrender of Hong Kong.

This story also serves as a good case study of differential treatment in literary historiography. Writings of similar topic or content sometimes receive drastically different receptions based on the author's or the publication outlet's reputation, political inclinations, and historical vicissitudes. This tendency is especially obvious in the

scholarship on wartime literature. For instance, *Overseas Chinese* published a series of essays on the topics of nostalgia and homesickness written by Ye Lingfeng, Dai Wangshu, and others in 1942. Many historians interpret this series as a sign of resistance against the Japanese. One scholar suggests that these writings voice subtle discontent against the authorities because they evoke homesickness and fan anti-government sentiments (Cheng 60). Similarly, the anthology *Hong Kong Literature during the Japanese Occupation: Collected Works by Ye Lingfeng and Dai Wangshu* place these writings together with the historical documents that indicate the writers' secret dealings with the wartime resistance forces. The intention is clear: exonerating Ye Lingfeng and Dai Wangshu, while using their writings on homesickness as a testament to their patriotism. However, if we can free ourselves from this frame of interpretation, it is possible to reach an alternative reading. This series of essays might well be serving the interests of the government, since evoking homesickness was an effective way to encourage non-local Chinese to return home, which was exactly what the repatriation policy tried to achieve. However, very few if any have suggested this possibility. Meanwhile, Lu Mengshu's "Dawn," along with the rest of *Rainscape,* remains unexplored. It appears that the author's biographical or political image can overshadow any tensions and incongruities that exist between the author and his/her work, and pigeonhole the way we approach and interpret wartime literature.

In the above I have presented some complexities of the content and context of *Rainscape* that rather blatantly undermine the official authorities and defeat its propaganda purposes. My goal is not to petition for a retrial on Lu Mengshu and place him under the category of resistance writer. After all, *Rainscape* was published in September 1944,

when the Japanese army was showing signs of defeat. The British nostalgia, untimely mentioning of the rice rationing policy, and the realistic portrait of the homecoming scene could be, more than anything, the writer's strategy for adapting to the changing political winds. What I seek to do is to read closely and to read with openness to alternative interpretations of some of the writings that are only mentioned in passing in previous historical studies, provide some explanations of their internal tensions, and call for reflections on the current historiographical practice that tends to see the author and the work as one, rather than as separate entities.

Chapter 3: Rain Imagery and Symbolism

In previous chapters, I have talked about how *Overseas Chinese* went to great lengths to publish *Rainscape*, and the possible motives behind this grand project amidst wartime scarcity. I have also analyzed a few stories in the book that contain ambivalent implications and undermine the official propagandistic discourse. My intention is to suggest a new approach that allows us to read and interpret the book afresh and apolitically. In the following, I will apply this approach to the examination of the rain imagery and symbolism in the book's titular story "Rainscape of the City." This story might read like a run-of-the-mill account of how a man of the colonial gentry meets his disgraceful end under the new regime. Looking closely, however, we can see that the author, Lu Mengshu, is using a seemingly political story to channel his personal ruminations on the literary field, especially the injustice and alienation he suffered as an outsider in the pre-war period, and his long-awaited fame and success during the occupation.

For purposes of comparison, I have also chosen two other intellectuals who used similar literary devices in their wartime writings. One of them is Ye Lingfeng, a renowned novelist and book collector in 1920's and 1930's Shanghai. His newspaper column complains about the humidity that comes along with the torrential rains of monsoon-inflicted Hong Kong, which is a metaphor of the substantial damages of war to civilization. Meanwhile, rain also serves as a portal that takes the writer back to his imaginary *Jiangnan* (Southern China), a virtual space where he reminisces about his difficult childhood and subsequent success. The incessant tensions between the two cities

– Hong Kong and *Jiangnan* – reveal the writer's homesickness for a place to which he could never return.

Another writer who is also obsessed with weather conditions is Chen Junbao. He was a university professor working closely with the Japanese to set up wartime libraries in Hong Kong. His diary discloses that he constantly consulted *The Classic of Changes* (Yijing 易經) during Japanese occupation. *The Classic of Changes* is one of the five Confucian canons serving as a center of influence in Imperial China and beyond. The book first emerged about three thousand years ago as a divination manual, consisting of sixty-four symbols known as hexagrams which account for the changes of the universe, but its cryptic wisdom continues to inspire other disciplines including ethics, philosophy, politics, and science. As with centuries of literati before him, Chen sought help from *The Classic of Changes* in times of physical peril and moral crisis. His interpretation of the rain hexagram is indicative of his embittered reflections on being an intellectual traversing multiple roles and responsibilities in the new administration.

Lu Mengshu, Ye Lingfeng, and Chen Junbao employ the rain imagery and symbolism in a wide array of genres and themes, including propaganda novellas, newspaper articles, and personal diaries. Rain is a trivial and harmless topic for these writers to write on without fear of touching a nerve with the state censor. More, it is a recurrent and tactilely tangible object that they could hold on to when everything around them falls into ruins. It is ridden with their fear, anxiety, and ambition. By investigating the rain imagery and symbolism in these writings, I hope to provide a cross-section of diverse intellectual lives under the new social order in the occupied city.

RAIN OF REBIRTH

Among these writers, Lu Mengshu gives the most positive portrayal of the rain. "Rainscape of the City" consists of a rain scene that signifies the antagonist's undoing at the end of the story. The antagonist, Mr. Wu, is a member of the colonial upper class – the so-called "noble gentry" (*jueshen* 爵紳). Having no regard for the moral expectations of his title, he is hedonistic and debauched. However, his fortune plummets once the war breaks out. Not only does he lose all of his valuable possessions, his mistresses also run away with his servants. Towards the end, he strolls alone after a cold rain has hit the city, completely stripped of his previous limousine-riding splendor. Seeing this forlorn figure, the narrator makes the comments below:

> However, [the rain] is always "sympathetic" to the people sharing the same fate here, so much so that it even helps eradicate the flies for mankind – the chilling rain froze all the flies. Sadly, this fly-eradication campaign might have come a bit too strong, for it even sent some people into the "freezer." (26)

The narrator welcomes the cold rain for its power of social cleansing. Not only does the rain get rid of pests, it also torments a pest-like figure like Mr. Wu. By visualizing and dramatizing Mr. Wu's suffering, the rain scene pushes the story to the narrative climax.

This moral tale carries overt political overtones. When the government took over the city, it wanted to rally support by demonstrating that the Pacific War, despite massive causalities and damage, was a necessary means to redress moral issues and salvage the colony from further degeneration. The authorities therefore decried social problems that

lingered on from the previous regime, and promptly implemented several "moral rectification" measures, such as an opium suppression policy and a pornography ban (Snow 109; 178).[19] The antagonist, Mr. Wu, is the personification of the social ills left behind by the colonizers. By subjecting him to a pouring rain, the final scene symbolizes the expurgation of the vicious residues, and a fresh start for the city. On the other hand, the rain scene draws a real-life connection with historical events. It reminds the reader of an incident on January 5, 1942 that was widely reported in *The Hong Kong News* regarding former civil servants and businessmen being evicted from their luxurious houses and forced to carry their hastily assembled belongings through a drizzle (Snow 132).[20] The rain scene offers gratification to general readers and converts their opposition against the former ruler to loyalty to the new regime.

Hidden under this political tale, however, are the author's ruminations over his lifelong struggles and present success in the literary field. Compared with the moral revival represented by the rain, the author seems to reckon more with its power of social rehierarchization. We can observe this preference from the way the author handles the ending of the story. It emphasises not only the poetic justice enacted by the fall of the anti-hero, but more importantly the new resources and upward mobility now available to the dominated citizens. Shivering in the drizzle, Mr. Wu admits to the narrator that all

[19] Ironically, the Japanese government started to pander to the popular taste with magazines such as *Popular Daily* that contained an erotica column in 1943, owing to the failure of more serious magazines such as *New East Asia Monthly*.

[20] *The Hong Kong News* describes "a sight seldom seen in the Colony:" memsahibs arrived wearing slacks instead of their usual dresses and humping their babies along on their backs in the Chinese fashion (Snow 132).

his household servants have run away with his money and mistresses, and gone back to their hometowns. Quite surprisingly, Mr. Wu seems to have come to terms with the appalling double betrayals rather quickly. He says that his mistresses are better off running away with his servants, and it is inappropriate for him to reminisce about the past. He proclaims: "The times have already changed! You youngsters, work hard for society, for people..." (29) Diegetically speaking, Mr. Wu's moral conversion seems abrupt and quite out of character, not least because he has been a ruthless degenerate for the majority of the story. For the author himself, nevertheless, this specific description of Mr. Wu passing on a baton to the I-narrator has a symbolic significance. Just like the underclasses in the story, the author is a beneficiary of the redistribution of social and literary resources in wartime. By entrusting the I-narrator with the grand mission to "work hard for society, for people," the author seems to imply that he is going to have a bigger stake and a more important role under the new social order.

This argument becomes clearer if we compare Lu's literary position before and during the war. He was a minor film critic in Shanghai literary circles, editing two film magazines for a brief period of time. Despite the vibrant literary networks in 1920's, Lu was neither affiliated with major literary societies, such as the Literary Association (*Wenxue yanjiuhui* 文學研究會) or the Creation Society (*Chuangzao she* 創造社), nor did he have a regular partnering publication house.[21] Bounded by the hierarchy of genre (film reviews were not considered "serious literature" as much as fiction and poetry) and

21 His books *Sparkles of Fire, Films and Literature,* and *Sister Ah Chun* were published by relatively small publishers like Liangyou 良友 and Zhenshanmei 真善美.

the lack of affiliation with major literary groups, he remained at the relative periphery of the literary field. Quite ironically, he met a stroke of luck only after he moved to Hong Kong and the city fell into the Japanese hands. While most intellectuals lamented the severe curtailment of physical and writing freedom, he leveraged this opportunity for his ascent to fame. By showing public support for the new regime, he gained an editing position at *Overseas Chinese* from 1941 to 1944, outlasting any of his previous editing jobs. In less than a year, his book *Rainscape* was published. This book cemented his status as the first (and only) published literary writer during the occupation. In 1945, he left *Overseas Chinese* to establish his magazine *Fragrant Island Monthly* (*Xiangdao yuebao* 香島月報), presumably to realize his dream of founding his own magazine after two aborted attempts in his early years (Chen 764). Within four short years, he rose from a minor columnist to a spokesperson for the local intellectuals.

Lu's lasting media exposure, stable career prospects, and opportunity for book publication would not have been possible if Hong Kong had not been occupied by the Japanese. If the relatively autonomous literary field in pre-war Hong Kong distributed resources according to factors such as hierarchy of genres, durable links with prominent figures, legitimacy of styles, competition between political parties, and so on, the new literary field was instituted through a single principle: willingness to toe the official line. It was from his marginal position that Lu decided to capitalize on the political crisis. Compared with other canonized writers like Ye Lingfeng or Dai Wangshu, Lu had less at stake and therefore was more motivated to trade his reputation for material and social

advantages. His compliance was the automatic product of the new principle governing the functioning of the literary field.

Given this background, "Rainscape of the City" was more than a moral tale enacting poetic justice for the underprivileged under the colonial administration. It is rather the author's gush of gratitude for a rehierarchized literary field from which he had substantially benefited. The proclamation "The times have already changed!" at the end of the story addresses not general readers but fellow writers who might have dismissed or wronged the author, or barred him from accessing literary resources in the pre-war period. One can find similar spite in the way he branded his own magazine, *Fragrant Island Monthly*, "the best periodical in Southern China in the past decade," striking a thinly-veiled jibe at fellow magazine owners and editors (*Lunxian* 31). This self-aggrandizing statement reveals the long years of friction and rivalry between him and other writers.

Lu's fortune did not last long. Once the literary field regained its autonomy independent of political influence, he was kicked out from the literati circle. For other intellectuals who suffered from political persecution or even physical punishment, Lu's submission to the Japanese left a bad taste in their mouths. For example, Ye Lingfeng met Lu by chance in 1952 and relished the latter's fall from grace, which according to him was "a product of bad karma" (*Lunxian* 31). This remark reminds us of Ye's foreword to Lu's *Rainscape* that briefly discusses the story's rain scene. Ye writes suggestively that the rain is only destructive to houses without a "solid foundation," and he would wait out the collapse of those houses with much patience and delight (1). Allegedly Ye wrote this foreword under Japanese coercion. If that was the case, then we should not be surprised

to find so much irony and hatred directed at the author. The same rain scene takes on opposite readings for Lu Mengshu and Ye Lingfeng due to their different positions in the literary field.

RAIN OF NOSTALGIA

Unlike Lu Mengshu, who sees a new horizon of opportunities in the imagery of rain, Ye Lingfeng only reckons its destructive power. Ye was one of the most prolific writers in Shanghai in early modern times, publishing more than a dozen novels and translations. A member of the Creation Society, he founded and edited periodicals such as *Imagined Continent* (*Huanzhou* 幻州) and *Modern Fiction* (*Xiandai xiaoshuo* 現代小說), all of which had a considerable following in Hong Kong in late 1920's. Many historians regard him as the progenitor of Hong Kong literature. Ironically, it was in Hong Kong that this prestigious writer stepped down from the pedestal and spent the darkest days of his life. Rain is a symbol for his suffering during the occupation. In the aforementioned foreword of *Rainscape*, Ye writes that the rain "makes the sea level higher, the rice pricier, buildings shakier, and people sicker" (192). The rain, and its by-products such as flood, famine, poor housing conditions, and epidemic disease, aggravates citizens' predicament during the occupation. As a bibliophile, he is also irked by damage done to his antique treasures by the rain. He grudgingly describes how the mist that accompanies the rainy season "makes everything ooze water," causing not only difficulty breathing but stains on book spines (153). We could associate this remark with both tangible wreckage

of cultural products and intangible forms of violence inflicted on the writer in times of war, most notably the deprivation of physical and intellectual freedom.

In the inaugural issue of *New East Asia Monthly*, for which Ye was the editor, he recalls an incident from the early days of surrender. When he left his home to hide from air raids, his neighbour, out of good intentions, broke into his apartment and destroyed some politically-sensitive works for him, such as *Chronology of War Resistance* (*Kangzhan dashiji* 抗戰大事記), *Anthology of Churchill's Speeches*, as well as his translation manuscripts of Henri Barbusse's anti-war book *Le Fue* (English title: *Under Fire*) ("Tunxian" 30). Though Ye tries to frame the event as a comical anecdote, its implication is graver. It demonstrates the scale and gravity of censorship and cultural destruction undergone by the city during the occupation. Even an ordinary citizen like his neighbor knew what kind of danger awaited an intellectual. More importantly, the passage reveals Ye's political stance, judging from the volume of resistance books he owned and his regret for the loss of those possessions.

The occasion that Ye chose to make this implicit political statement is worth noting. Ye's acceptance of the editing position of a propaganda magazine is a public statement of compliance to the government. However, making use of this significant occasion to bemoan his sacrifices and even hint at his anti-war attitude, Ye also puts a big question mark over his true political orientation. In fact, some documents unearthed later showed that Ye was working for the Kuomintang resistance force from August 1942, the exact same month that this inaugural piece was published (Lo 310). This opening piece therefore carries double meanings, declaring allegiance to the government on the one hand

and undercutting such allegiance with equivocal implications on the other hand. The title of this article "Notes on Swallowing Wool Felt" (*Tunzhan suibi* 吞旃隨筆) captures the same spirit of revolt. The phrase "swallowing wool felt" is an allusion to the story of Su Wu,[22] a Chinese statesman of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) who was captured by a foreign lord but refused to succumb. Su Wu's predicament reached a climax when the foreign lord denied him food and a resting place: "When rain and snow fell, Su Wu slept on a mound of snow and swallowed wool felt, surviving in extreme conditions for a few days."[23] By alluding to the Su Wu's story in his essay title, Ye not only draws on the evocative power of rain to vivify the sufferings of mankind under dictatorship, but also inscribes himself in the genealogy of heroic historical figures.

While Su Wu's adamance won his release, Ye's covert participation in the resistance force was heavily punished. He ended up serving jail time from May to August 1943 (*Lunxian* 310). Only a few people learned about this incident, and none knew exactly what happened inside the prison walls, as Ye did not write about this ordeal even after the war was over. However, it was noticeable from Ye's writings that he directs negative feelings less toward an actual figure (e.g. his neighbor or the imperial army which carried out house raids) but toward the city in general. Hong Kong becomes a scapegoat for all his inexpressible sentiments. Certainly, a direct denigration of Hong Kong would have been inappropriate, given that the official narrative propagates the "Rebirth of Hong

[22] The name Su Wu 蘇武 coincidentally matched with the name of a Kuomintang agent who introduced Ye Lingfeng to work for the resistance force. (Lunxian 309)
[23] The original was from the Chinese Text Project, while the translated text was done by me.

Kong" under the leadership of Japan. The writer instead criticizes wartime Hong Kong tactfully through a comparison with *Jiangnan*. The imagery of rain serves as a trigger for memories and nostalgia.

In an article "Remembering *Jiangnan* (Mountains and Woods)"[24], Ye says, "Facing the humid fog and seasonal rain which assault Hong Kong from the shore, I am most obsessively reminiscing about the *Jiangnan* scenery masked in mist and stream." (149) The rain takes him down memory lane, in the course of which he finds that everything in Hong Kong – weather, mountains, animals and even people – lacks the idyll and sophistication of *Jiangnan*. For example, the spring rain in *Jiangnan* brings "an earthy fragrance," which gives a burst of vitality to the inhabitants; the rain in Hong Kong only causes "a damp smell emanating from the yellow mud and grass roots," which makes his skin itchy and his books moldy (147). The mountains in *Jiangnan* are boundless and yet close enough to grasp, while those in Hong Kong "always stand aloof outside the window, never once coming to [his] desk." (147) Even the poem-reciting beggars in *Jiangnan* are more noble-minded than the light-bulb-snatching rascals in Hong Kong ("Yi jiangnan (qier)" 155). By invoking binaries between vigor and lethargy, finesse and vulgarity, and distance and closeness, the author zooms in on Hong Kong's inadequacies. He concludes, "After spending six or seven springs here, I still find myself a stranger." (147).

To complicate matters, this ideal "*Jiangnan*" might not have a physical location at all. Ye's article titled "Homesickness" offers a more complicated account of his

[24] The article was divided into two parts: "Remembering Jiangnan (Mountains and Woods)" and "Remembering Jiangnan (Part II) (Insects, Fish and People)" which were serialized in the literary supplement of *Overseas Chinese* on 2 April and 15 April, 1944 respectively.

hometown. It no longer features motifs of landscape paintings or accommodates "poet-beggars." Instead, he describes his hometown Nanking (a part of *Jiangnan*) as "dim and gloomy," and he confesses that he knows very little of it because he left there at a young age (138). The only thing he remembers about his place is the tragic death of his mother, an incident that "pains him for life." (139) Even so, he still feels a stronger emotional attachment to his hometown than to Hong Kong. He writes that when he sees the spring bloom in Hong Kong, what appears in his mind is "the vague and dingy scenery of the hometown." (139)

From this passage, we discover that "*Jiangnan*" is unmoored from a specific locale. It could be the Nanking that only exists in his memory, a combination of different cities where he had stayed ("Shanghai is a place I received education, and Peking is my ideal hometown"), or a sheer literary creation (138; 148). In addition, his love for "*Jiangnan*" and hatred for Hong Kong is not reducible to objective differences between two places. He prefers a "dingy" "*Jiangnan*" to a "flowery" Hong Kong (139). Finally, every time he brings up "*Jiangnan*," he has to do so through the comparison with Hong Kong. The former does not have an independent existence, but only emerges in opposition against the latter.

If "*Jiangnan*" is a utopia without a physical or actual location, then Hong Kong would be its mirror-image through which "*Jiangnan*" is fantastically projected, poetically represented, and incessantly counterposed. This mirror image is captured by the following passage in "Remembering *Jiangnan* (Part II) (Insects, Fish and People)," when Ye is checking his book collection:

> The indoor humidity condensed on the glass of the bookshelf, forming a thin layer of mist, through which I see golden book spines inside. Just like the winter in *Jiangnan*: through the misty glass windows on the street, I saw stove fire burning inside and the laughter (of the household) was heavenly. (153)

The passage transitions from the present locale in Hong Kong to the virtual site "*Jiangnan*" via the "misty glass." The glass enables three perspectives of gaze. The first is the actual gaze of the author looking through the glass of his bookshelf at his book collection. The second is the retrospective (or imaginary) gaze of the author looking through the glass window at a merry household with cosy fire and blissful laughter. The third, though not explicitly mentioned in the text, is the reflective gaze of the author – routing through his retrospection or imagination of "*Jiangnan*" –at himself in his utter depletion and alienation. The utopia and its mirror image emerge and counteract through the shifting perspectives of gaze through the misty glass. The place where he resides, Hong Kong, is at once absolutely real, connected with the tactile sensation of moisture and humidity, and absolutely unreal, constituted in the double image of "*Jiangnan*." It is in such inter/counteraction that Ye most keenly feels his aching entrapment in Hong Kong, and the infinite distance from "*Jiangnan*."

"*Jiangnan*" and Hong Kong had always been inseparable in Ye's career. In the pre-war days, "*Jiangnan*" (or more specifically Shanghai) marked the peak of his career while Hong Kong validated his ever-reaching influence. Many budding writers looked up to Ye as a literary celebrity or even a role model. For example, Lui Lun (侶倫1911-1988), one of the founding fathers of Hong Kong literature, said that Ye initiated his entry

to literature by publishing two of his pieces in *Modern Fiction* (128). The early works of Hong Kong writers like Lui Lun and Tse Sen-kwong (謝晨光 n.d.)[25] also imitated Ye's florid vocabulary and sentimental style (*Xianggang: xiaoshuo juanyi* 122-163). If Hong Kong attested the zenith of Ye's fame and authorities in early modern times, it also witnessed his descent a decade later. The once trend-setter now became a mere instrument of the authoritative regime, deprived of his creative freedom and suspected by fellow writers. It was in this desperate state that he looked back at the "*Jiangnan*" that always eluded him. Ye's misery is revealed by his short story titled "The Book-selling Woman – Urban Melancholy" in 1944. It depicts a woman persuading the I-narrator to buy books which turn out to be the latter's own work. The woman says that they are the favorites of her deceased daughter, but the I-narrator thinks that "these books are the worst and most worthless objects in the world." (211) The I-narrator's self-deprecating remark speaks volumes for the author's melancholy.

RAIN OF DIVINATION

I have thus far talked about writers who fled to Hong Kong before the war broke out. The following example features a writer who resided in Hong Kong before and throughout the period of Japanese occupation. Chen Junbo was born in Guangdong and came to Hong Kong at the age of eleven. He later became the director of the Fung Ping Shan Library and a faculty member of the humanities department at the University of Hong

[25] There is no information as to his year of birth and death.

Kong. When Hong Kong surrendered to the Japanese army in 1941, he retained his position by helping the authorities convert the Fung Ping Shan Library into wartime libraries.[26] In January 1945, he succeeded Lu Mengshu to become the editor of *Overseas Chinese* when Lu left to set up *Fragrant Island Monthly*. He remained active in the culture industry in the post-war period, mainly assisting the Chinese government in retrieving lost books from Japan.

Chen was part of the tightly-knit network between writers, newspapers, and the authorities during the occupation. He had close relations with writers across the political spectrum. Although he was generally associated with other peace-advocating writers like Jiang Kongyin (江孔殷 1864 - 1952) and Bao Shaoyou (鮑少游 1892 - 1985), he maintained private correspondence with Kuomintang resistance groups (including the one to which Ye Lingfeng belonged) (*Lunxian* 36). Besides writers, he rubbed elbows with the media tycoons of *Overseas Chinese* and *The Hong Kong News*, as well as government officials such as Kanda Kīchirō and Shimada Kinji (*Lunxian 40*).[27] These connections helped him retain his position at the university and gain insider's access to the authorities during the occupation.[28] Meanwhile, he kept a low profile and carefully avoided being mentioned by other cultural figures in their writings. Because of his clever maneuvers, he evaded the political persecution that befell almost everyone around him, including Lu

[26] From Chen Junbo's diary, we learn that the Japanese had separated the Fung Ping Shan Library into two: one for the Japanese officials and another for the general public.

[27] Both Chen Junbao and Chishiki Shinji (知識真治; the owner of *The Hong Kong News*) were members of the "Hong Kong Literary Society Club," which was established during the war. His poetry exchanges with Kanda Kīchirō and Shimada Kinji were also published in *Overseas Chinese* without his consent.

[28] Chen Junbao had friends who worked at the post office censoring letters before the fall of Hong Kong. Thus, he was able to get more information about the war than others (*Lunxian* 36).

Mengshu, Ye Lingfeng, and Shum Wai-yau, in the post-war period. In the eyes of some historians, he is described as "in control of situations and attentive to details; always ahead of the game." (*Lunxian* 38) If we read Chen's diary, however, we discover a completely different character. Instead of a political maverick, we see an ordinary person who was insecure about the political changes around him, suspicious of most writers and officials that he came across, and eager to seek comfort and guidance from an ancient divination manual. Throughout his voluminous writings, the imagery and symbolism of rain act as a connecting thread that offers us glimpses into his complex psyche.

To begin with, Chen devoted considerable narrative space in his diary to describing everyday weather conditions, to the point that he thought people would be bewildered to find so many records of weather variations and trivial matters(732). He explained that every time he wanted to pick up a pen, he realized that in the current circumstances there was nothing to write about except "What a nice cool autumn!" [29], or perhaps not even so because the summer rain still lingered on; this realization only aggravated his boredom (731). Indeed, any reader of his diary would be quite disappointed that Chen chose such mundane subject matter amidst the vicissitudes of war. However, for him to assume that someone would read his diary and find his seasonal musings banal had a deeper underpinning. It indicated that this rather powerful government appointee was, like the rest of the writers and citizens, genuinely worried about any political surprise raids or

[29] "What a nice cool autumn!" (「卻道天涼好個秋」) is a reference to the poetic verse "Chou Nuer" by Xin Qizi (辛棄疾 1140-1207) in the Song dynasty.

backstabbing. His vigilance made clear the intensity and extensiveness of political repression from which no one could escape.

Chen's paranoia existed for a reason. As someone so close to power, he was no stranger to censorship throughout his career. The period that he was serving the editing team of *Overseas Chinese* in 1945 was particularly strenuous. For example, a few months after he reported for duty at *Overseas Chinese*, he started receiving phone calls from "the news department –" a euphemism for the state censor – which either asked him to alter the topic or revise the content of the editorials (800; 806). It is worth noting that Chen only briefly mentioned these events without ever expressing any personal feelings in his diary; at most he would say "it is the first time to encounter such and such." Once again, it validates the self-censorship he had to impose on his most confidential scribbles. From some suggestive passages, we could also piece together several incidents concerning the political control over the newspaper. For example, the government mouthpiece *The Hong Kong News* wanted to merge with *Overseas Chinese*, but the latter refused for fear that the government mouthpiece only wanted a bigger market share and might hinder its prospects for development (793). There was no mention in the diary about how the government officials reacted to *Overseas Chinese*'s refusal to cooperate, but half a month later the newspaper was left out of a major scoop about the resignation of the Prime Minister of Japan. Chen only learned later from a close liaison that the official news agency Dōmei News Agency (*Dōmei tsushinsha* 同盟通信社) released the news exclusively to *The Hong Kong News* (799). It appeared that the government had tried to coerce *Overseas Chinese* into co-operation by cutting its information source, a ploy that might have succeeded had

the war not ended four months later. Constantly in the invisible grip of censorship, Chen could not help but find refuge in petty matters like seasonal musings.

When recording weather conditions, Chen tended to associate rainfall with the on-going state of the war, such as the occurrence of aerial attacks or an increase of the price of rice. For example, he often stayed by the windows to hear military aircraft hovering very low in the rain, or he was curious why the air raid siren continued when there was a rainstorm (570; 705). When he noticed that there was no rainfall after the Qingming Festival, he predicted subsequent drought and food shortages (606). Other observations veered off from scientific speculation and bore a mythical trace. When he saw green and purple air streams high in the sky at dusk, or a mass of black clouds moving eastward, he identified these phenomena as signs of omen (607). Fully aware of the irrationality of his thought, he confessed that he looked skyward for predications and answers not for fun or interest but for "worsening circumstances." (607) Again, he did not elaborate on his specific plight. However, as a journalist working inside a leading newspaper and supposedly gaining immediate access to information, he should have been the last person to display such despair and resort to illogical conjectures. The fact that he did showed us how stringent the media environment was.

In Chen's defense, his tendency to attach mythical meanings to natural events and objects was not entirely out of superstition. Rather, it was a common tactic shared by newspaper editors and writers to convey sensitive messages. When the city was on lockdown, accurate information was inaccessible and the media organs were closely regulated. Some newspapers would then foster a culture of alternative reading or

purposeful misreading of the published information. One fascinating example was *Overseas Chinese*. When the Japanese army exhibited signs of a defeat towards the end of WWII, the newspaper journalists would employ a variety of techniques such as "planting contradictory things in the same passage, annexing the ending with intriguing touches, and putting up a straw dog" in their editorials, supplements, special issues or other writings (Cheng 117). These techniques did not aim to deliver exactly what the news room wanted to say, but to "inculcate readers with a mysterious perception" so that the reader would either suspect every fact stated in newspapers or look for signs that pointed to an opposite reading (Cheng 117). For example, when the news article deemed something "impossible," it usually referred to highly probable events; when it called certain attacks by the opposing forces "an act of vain hope," it usually meant that the opposing forces had succeeded in inflicting damage on the Japanese army (Cheng 117).

It remained unclear whether readers of *Overseas Chinese* caught these hints, but they also contributed a great deal of creativity to this culture of alternative reading. The literary supplement of *Overseas Chinese* featured a new illustration on its front page every month. This innocuous arrangement drew surprisingly extensive public attention starting from January 1943. Some people began to attach mythical, prophetic interpretation to the illustrations, taking them as a predication for recent developments and outcomes of the war. For example, they interpreted a diagram of a beauty riding on a horse as the beginning of aerial warfare, or a picture of harbor scenery as a signal for naval operations by the Allies (Cheng 131 – 132). At first glance, these readers' actions appeared as irrational as Chen's predicting the future through the study of rains and clouds. However,

whether their foretelling was accurate or not was not as important as the fact that the reader was the one who initiated an alternative reading. According to the editors of the supplement, they did not have any secret agenda when first changing the layout design. It was only after being badgered by many readers about the "real message" of these illustrations that they began to plant a hidden meaning in the illustrations. In other words, a new discourse was constituted through the dialogic interactions between the newspaper editors and the reader, with the latter being the initiator of such discourse.

Chen's forecasts with cloud patterns, the journalists' cultivation of a culture of misreading, and citizens' active participation in the guessing games are an act of counteraction. The overwhelming political pressure might have kept these people closely monitored, prescribing the ways they could conduct their lives, express themselves, and interact with others. However, it failed to stop them straying from the official parameters and liberating themselves through private reading. Sometimes it meant predicting the outcomes of war through observations of the nature as in the case of Chen, fostering reverse psychology as in the case of the editors, or making use of graphics instead of words to fill the information gaps as in the case of general readers. These contingent and spontaneous tactics might appear illogical, but they situated these people at the productive end of a new discourse, serving symbolic charges at the authorities. In fact, the public attention on the frontpage illustrations of *Overseas Chinese* was so overwhelming that the government needed to forbid the newspaper from changing the layout in February 1945, putting an end to a transgressive act that had lasted for two whole years (Cheng 132).

Chen not only made his own observations, he also became increasingly reliant on *The Classic of Changes* for oracles and divinations as the war intensified. For those who are not familiar with the book, Chen's action appears to be mere superstition. However, for Chinese people, although *The Classic of Changes* is an ancient text, it had remained a work of authority from the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) through the Qing dynasty (1644–1912 CE). It carries varying implications for people from all walks of life: peasants used pages from the book as a protection against evil spirits, while scholars placed it as "first among the [Confucian] classics." (Smith 2) Some scholars even compare its cultural importance to "sacred scriptures like the Jewish and Christian Bibles, the Qur'an, the Hindu Vedas and the Buddhist sutras." (Smith 17) It is therefore no surprise that Chen sought practical and spiritual guidance from this century-old book during Japanese occupation.

The Classic of Changes consists of 64 hexagrams (a symbol made up by 6 connected or broken lines), each of which representing a situation or a development. Every hexagram has its unique name, a brief description known as a "judgment," and a short explication for each of its six lines known as a "line statement." (Smith 4) Querents would first throw yarrow sticks or coins, the combinations of which lead to a particular hexagram. By decoding the symbolic meaning of the hexagram, querents would be able to gain insight into the changes happening around them, and devise a strategy for their problems and uncertainties at critical moments in life.

For Chen, one of these moments came in September 21, 1944, when he finished setting up the wartime libraries and had to hand over the libraries to the newly appointed

director Kanda Kīchirō (717). He appeared to be bothered by the drastic career change that, having no one to talk to, he consulted *The Classic of Changes.* He received the hexagram *Guai* (夬), literally "resoluteness" or "breakthrough" (Figure 4). The hexagram also signifies "rain," pinpointing the decisive moment at which water droplets evaporate, form clouds, and fall on the ground (Huang 456).[30] Quite peculiarly, Chen did not write down the entire judgment and line statement of the hexagram in his diary.[31] He seems more intrigued by the rain imagery in one particular line statement, of which he copied onto his diary: "Nine in the Third: Wounded on the forehead. It is ominous. The nobleman is so resolute: Moving alone and meeting rain, if wet he will get steamed up. There is no trouble." (Chen 717; translation from Shaughnessy 265)

Figure 4: The hexagram *Guai*. Richard J. Smith. *The "I Ching": A Biography* (Princeton University Press, 2012), xiv.

[30] This additional reading comes from one of the "Ten Commentaries" (Shiyi 十翼), an authoritative interpretation on *The Classic of Changes* that led to the latter's canonization in Han dynasty (Smith 48).

[31] The entire hexagram reads as follows: "*Guai* "Resoluteness" (Hexagram 43) Resolute: Raised up in the king's courtyard. A captive screams. There is danger, announced from the city. Not beneficial to approach enemies; beneficial to have someplace to go. First Nine: Wounded in the front foot. Going: not victorious. It is distress. Nine in the Second: An apprehensive scream. In the evening and night there are enemies. Do not worry. Nine in the third: wounded on the forehead. It is ominous. The nobleman is so resolute: Moving alone and meeting rain, if wet he will get steamed up. There is no trouble. Nine in the Fourth: Buttocks without flesh. His movement is halting, pulling a sheep. Regrets gone. Hearing words that are not believable. Nine in the Fifth: Purslane so resolute, in the middle of the road. There is no trouble. Top Six: There is no scream. In the end it is ominous." (Shaughnessy 265)

The first part of this line statement draws an analogue between the line position of the hexagram "Nine in the Third"[32] and the human body part "forehead," because both are perceived as a storehouse of vigor and energy (Huang 458). "Wounded in the forehead" warns that, if a person is so eager to sever ties with petty men that he sets loose his strong power and expresses anger on his face, troubles would ensue (Huang 458 – 459). The second part tells us that a gentleman should be resolute enough to walk by himself; even if he gets wet in the rain – a figurative expression of being suspected or deplored – he could still be free from guilt or judgement (Huang 459). Again, we have an image of a man walking in the rain by himself, much like the antihero Mr. Wu in Lu Mengshu's "Rainscape of the City," but the connotation is completely different. While in Lu's short story the rain signifies the expurgation of the moral ills; here it represents the external adversity that reinforces a person's inner resoluteness and perseverance.

This imagery of a nobleman in the rain is valuable to our analysis. On the one hand, Chen seemed to have embodied every bit of this moral teaching. He maintained a durable relationship with almost all cultural figures in the field, even though we could surmise from his diary that he harbored reservations about some of them (*Lunxian* 44; Chen 637). Hiding his discontent and leveraging his connections with these influential figures, Chen could strive for the best interests of his fellow colleagues as well as the books in the libraries. He managed to procure extra rice rations to share with his subordinates when

[32] "Nine in the Third" refers to the third line from the bottom. Since it is the last line of the lower trigram (the three lines at the bottom), it is generally associated with strong life forces.

most citizens were battling with poverty, and ensured that all could keep their positions and welfare even after he stepped down from the role of library director (*Lunxian* 38; Chen 717). He also collected many books and manuscripts from all over Hong Kong and centralized them at the university, so that these cultural treasures would not be burned or sold by the imperial army (contrasting with the substantial loss suffered by Ye Lingfeng). His valuable contribution to civilization was widely acknowledged in the post-war period (Chen III). Just like a nobleman walking alone in the rain, Chen stood firm in his faith and persevered in difficult times.

On the other hand, one could not fail to notice the irony for Chen – someone who was "irresolute" enough to resort to divination – to receive a hexagram that embodies "resoluteness." Even he admitted that, after reading the hexagram, he found "making decisions decisively" a quality beyond his grasp (717). What was the root of his indecisiveness? I believe it had much to do with the two-sidedness of his role and responsibility. As the director of the libraries, while he shielded the books from destruction by storing them in the government-sponsored libraries, he also facilitated the transportation of those books back to Japan, as had happened to the 110 boxes of Chinese books in 1942 (Chen III). His role as a preserver of civilization coincided with that of an enabler of cultural theft. In addition, he was conflicted by his overlapping role as the censor and the censored. We learned from the above analysis that he was haunted by the omnipresent surveillance to the point that he practiced self-censorship in his private writings. Meanwhile, one of his job duties was to regulate the imports and exports of books, deciding whether certain politically-sensitive books could leave the borders or not

(Chen 591-593). His mission to preserve cultural treasures as an intellectual clashed with his official charge to restrict artistic autonomy as an agent of censorship.

Because of these and many other complicated occasions that accentuated the conflicts of his varying roles, Chen constantly interrogated himself about the purpose of trying to save the ruined and the destroyed (Chen 812). When he witnessed the destruction of the Terrace of the Song Dynasty Emperors (a historical monument in Hong Kong) by air raids, he lamented it at first but then questioned if it was even worthwhile to preserve it since it would become another ruined "Rome" anyway (Chen 627). From his diary we get a glimpse of his conflicted mental state from traversing different roles and responsibilities. While all three writers in one way or another served the authoritative regime, unlike Lu who was bent on climbing the social ladder, or Ye who was secretly helping the resistance, Chen did not have a clear agenda and simply went with the flow. His wartime experience was shared by most writers of the time who struggled to form a sense of self between two poles of the political spectrum and met with many irresolute, equivocal occasions.

Conclusion: Drowning Literati

Historians have a special term to describe the intellectuals who act against their own country and cave in to the enemy regime: "drowning literati" (*luoshui wenren* 落水文人). The term aptly captures the involuntariness and contingency that underpinned any activities and actions in times of war. When the rain pours, simply keeping one's head above water is difficult. In this research, I have underlined the nuances and complexities in all personal and political decisions. In fact, there is no clear boundary between the two, because political decisions are ridden with personal tactics and calculations, while even the most private moments remain under the shadow of political repression and violence.

The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong lasted for three years and eight months, but for these "drowning literati" its repercussions lingered on for years and even decades. The end of war might have improved the well-being of general citizens, but it certainly put these intellectuals' lives and reputation in immediate jeopardy. Those who had connections with the government had to go through rounds of trials proving their innocence or actions under duress. Some, like Lu Mengshu, never rebounded from the persecution and spent their final days ostracized. Others, like Shum Wai-yau and Ye Lingfeng, survived the ordeal and moved on. Shum's *Overseas Chinese* became one of the longest-standing newspapers in Hong Kong, while Ye wrote a *Trilogy of Hong Kong* which was attributable to the founding of Hong Kong Studies in the 1960's. Chen Junbao might be the most fortunate of all, for his service to the Japanese was easily forgiven and forgotten over his enormous contribution to preserving cultural artifacts. The war has, for better or

worse, fundamentally transformed how these writers and intellectuals defined their past actions and took their following paths.

From the private and public writings of these writers, we see underlying their political agendas and declarations an intricate myriad of emotions and sentiments: dread, pity, shame, sorrow, and melancholy. Only through these personal feelings, connections, and ambiguities can we understand these writers as more than flat, one-sided historical figures, and discover the humanity behind their political identities – resistant, compliant, or otherwise. Together these writings provided a comprehensive representation of intellectual lives in the occupied city. The writers' varying situations and destinies during the occupation foreshadow our contemporary concerns with the literary circumstances and ever-shrinking freedom in Hong Kong and beyond. The rain that enshrouded the city seven decades ago might presage a greater tempest to come.

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